DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 121 FL 015 937

AUTHOR Rupp, James H.
TITLE Whole Language in the Elementary ESL Classroom.
PUB DATE Mar 86
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (20th, Anaheim, CA, March 3-8, 1986). Document contains light type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Class Activities; *Classroom Communication; Classroom Environment; Classroom Techniques; *Educational Theories; Elementary Education; *English (Second Language); *Reading Instruction; Second Language Instruction; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Whole Language Approach

ABSTRACT

The whole language approach to literacy, which has been highly promoted in the Albuquerque (New Mexico) public schools, is based on recent psycholinguistic research on the reading process, and it views learning to read as a developmental process moving from the whole to the parts. It is done in an encouraging, positive environment that is as risk-free as possible, where children are asked to use their background and experience and be active partners in the process. Many similarities exist between the whole language approach and the teaching of English as a second language (ESL), where the four language skills are taught as an integrated whole. In both, the teacher's role includes facilitating and modeling language use and creating an environment where it is almost impossible not to learn. An elementary school ESL program has incorporated the whole language approach into a variety of ESL activities, including: the morning message on the board that can contain almost anything and serves as a vehicle for reacting, discussion, and other group activities; squiggle writing, in which students are given written squiggles from which they develop a picture and story; and use of resource materials for students to do research on a given topic that is also incorporated into other class activities. The techniques have proven successful and may suit some instructional styles and situations. (MSE)

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WHOLE LANGUAGE IN THE ELEMENTARY ESL CLASSROOM

by James H. Rupp

For the past few years, the Whole Language Approach to Literacy has been highly promoted in the Albuquerque Public Schools. As we attended workshops and in-service meetings on the subject, it seemed to me that there are parallels between the Whole Language Approach and recent theories of Second Language Pedagogy. In this presentation I'd like to briefly examine these theories and what I see they have in common. Then I'd like to share with you several ways in which we have incorporated the whole language approach in our ESL program.

The whole language approach to literacy is based on recent Psycholinguistic research into the reading process by such people as the Goodmans, Yetta and Kenneth, and Frank Smith. These researchers, and others, view reading as an active process, whereby the reader makes predictions using language cues, such as graphophonemic, grammatical, or semantic. S/he then confirms these predictions and integrates what was read into her/his world view. Kenneth Goodman views reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game.

Much of the whole language literature deals with how this psycholinguistic research into the reading process can be applied to the classroom. Whole language as a pedagogical theory has ten components. (Figure 1) Several aspects should be noted. First of all, learning to read is not done in an

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WHAT IS A WHOLE LANGUAGE LITERACY PROGRAM?

A Program Which. . .

1. Makes use of whole, meaningful reading materials.
2. Focuses on comprehension and communication.
3. Utilizes and depends upon quality children's literature.
4. Helps children learn to integrate and balance all cuing systems (graphophonic, syntactic, syntactic, semantic, background and experience).
5. Treats literacy learning as a language development process.
6. Encourages risk taking, hypothesis testing, self monitoring.
7. Treats literacy as a means to an end.
8. Approaches literacy as a movement from whole to parts.
9. Encourages children to utilize their background, knowledge and experiences for comprehension.
10. Promotes reading and writing as enjoyable, useful and purposeful activities.

Fig. 1

empty, sterile environment, and it is not an isolated activity, separate from other language skills. It is viewed as a developmental process. It moves from the whole to the parts. It is done in an encouraging, positive environment, as risk-free as possible, where children are asked to use their backgrounds and experience. The learners are active partners in the process. Reading becomes a fun thing to do, but with a purpose.

This was a quick and cursory overview of whole language. I am assuming that most of you are probably familiar with the research and its applications. If not, we can discuss it further at the end, if we have time. What interested me as I heard more and more about whole language was the parallels recent ESL research and pedagogy.

Like many of you, I was trained to use the Audio-Lingual Method, which I view as a part-to-whole approach. I spent most of my teaching career being frustrated because my students never seemed to be able to "bridge the gap" between school-learned English and "real-world" English. I was especially frustrated teaching elementary-aged children, until I put all the basals on the shelf and started using language experience. Our district still orders basals for us, and they still sit on the shelves, unless I give them to students as rewards. (As an aside, I'm still waiting for textbook companies to discover the world of elementary ESL.)

About this time time I discovered ESL researchers and practitioners who made me feel that I wasn't alone or completely crazy in my frustration and need for a different approach. It was very exciting to listen to Mary Galvan and Stephen Krashen and discover such things as Asher's TPR.

As I have read and studied both whole language and recent ESL research and apply them to my classroom, I seem to find more and more similarities. If we look at these guidelines from Krashen & Terrell's book, The Natural Approach, it appears that they are telling us the same things as the whole language people, especially about where the focus of the program should be. (Figure 2) It is on comprehension and acquiring language within a context. Let's look again at the 10 whole language principles, only this time applied to a whole-language ESL program. (Figure 3) They both have the same goal of communicating and comprehension. They both look at language learning as developmental. Children go through stages as they learn to read and write their native languages; just as children go through stages as they learn or acquire a second language. Both start where the children are, utilizing their backgrounds and experience to build competence and confidence. The four skills -listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are not taught in isolation, but as an integrated whole. One skill area may be emphasized from time to time as needed. Teachers help children develop

THE GREAT PARADOX OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning.

THE NATURAL APPROACH: GUIDELINES

1. The goal of the Natural Approach is communication skills.
2. Comprehension precedes production.
3. Production emerges.
4. Acquisition activities are central.
5. Lower the affective filter.

NATURAL APPROACH AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY

1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
2. The Natural Order Hypothesis
3. The Monitor Hypothesis
4. The Input Hypothesis
5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis
6. The Role of Aptitude
7. The First Language
8. Routines and Patterns
9. Individual Variation
10. Age Difference

from: Krashen, S.D. & T.D. Terrell. 1983. The Natural Approach.

Figure 2

WHAT IS A WHOLE LANGUAGE ESL PROGRAM?

A Program Which . . .

1. Makes use of whole, meaningful language materials.
2. Focuses on comprehension and communication.
3. Utilizes and depends on quality language and literature.
4. Helps children learn to integrate and balance all cuing systems.
5. Treats language acquisition as a development process.
6. Encourages risk taking, hypothesis testing, self monitoring.
7. Treats language acquisition as a means to an end.
8. Approaches language acquisition as a movement from whole to parts.
9. Encourages children to use their background, knowledge and experiences for comprehension and communication.
10. Promotes language acquisition as enjoyable, useful and purposeful.

Figure 3

skills in using various kinds of linguistic cues available to them in order to improve their language processing abilities. The children in the ESL room are active participants in their learning, just as students in a whole language classroom.

To me, one of the most interesting and important results of all this is the changing role of the teacher. S/he now becomes a facilitator, guide, and model for students. Much learning takes place through peer teaching, both formal and informal. (Our kids learn a lot of interesting language on the playground.) The children become active learners and they appear to internalize concepts and rules more easily. I remember learning the color names in Spanish when I participated in a ten minute demonstration of the Silent Way during college. I still can't remember much of what was taught me in two years of high-school Spanish.

Another important role for the teacher is to create an environment in which it is practically impossible for a child NOT to learn English. The classroom should be full of language opportunities for students, with writing and charts covering the walls (without being to busy or covering more space than the the fire marshal will allow). There is an article in the September, 1985 issue of TESOL Quarterly by Enright and McCloskey entitled, "Yes, Talking! Organizing the Classroom to Promote Second Language Acquisition". It says more than I can today about creating a productive

environment, and I urge you to read it.

Before sharing some whole language successes we have had, let me give you a quick background of our program. We are a Chapter I school with a state funded Bilingual Program, of which ESL is one component. I was originally hired seven years ago after the school had an influx of Indochinese refugee children, since I had previously taught ESL in Viet-Nam for 5 1/2 years. Although the ESL population has changed since then, with more Spanish speakers, along with Koreans and Chinese, about 1/4 of the total school population continues to be A or B-level ESL.

Our program is not a regular pull-out program, nor is it total-immersion. We keep the A and B-level students in our room all morning, working in 10-week cycles. We re-evaluate students and program between cycles. As students "graduate" from our morning program, we see them on a pull-out basis in the afternoon, until they are ready for the classroom or Chapter I help.

We begin our morning with whole-group activities and then spilt the children into small groups, cycling them through various teaching stations during the rest of the morning. Our whole-group activities begin with opening exercises - the flag pledge and calendar. Then we often have the first whole language activity which I'd like to share with you - Morning

Message. Although we use it as a whole-group activity, it is very adaptable and can also be used with small groups. It can also be used in a pull-out program with some modifications.

The morning message is written on the chalkboard before the children arrive. Is consists of the date, with a four or five-line message. It's hard to describe, because the message itself can be almost anything the teacher wants to use. Let me show you some examples of ones that I have used. I made up some of them, and others (with an *) come from the book, Scrawlers to Scholars, by Nan and Jay Hamner. (Figure 4)

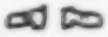
As you can see, a morning message is only limited by the creativity of the teacher. It can be written at any level. We find this helpful since we have students in grades one to five, at different stages of development. The message itself can incorporate almost anything you want. For example, if your district has a curriculum guide and you're expected to teach certain sentence patterns or grammatical structures, you can include them in your morning message. The important thing to remember is that the content comes first. The structure being used is secondary, putting the grammar within the context of some kind of communicative message, which is also a model.

Hello! What are you wearing?

Who is wearing a red today?

Who is wearing blue today?

Who is wearing white today?

Who is wearing brown  today?

We are a well-dressed group!

It's New Mexico State Fair Time!

There are _____ at the fair.

There are _____ at the fair.

There are _____ at the fair.

There are _____ at the fair.

There are _____ at the fair.

The State Fair is fun, fun, fun!

date

It's Michelangelo's birthday!

Michelangelo buonarotti was born on march 6 1475 in italy he is a famous artist and sculptor he has many famous works in the vatican in rome italy today workers are busy restoring the ceiling he painted in the sistine chapel

Figure 4

There are several steps to follow in doing the morning message (Figure 5). I usually begin by reading the message to the children. Next, we read it together, line-by-line, with me reading first and having the children repeat. Reading together gives the children a chance to try, without worrying about the risks of having others hear them. I sometimes ask for individuals to volunteer to read the message to the rest of the class. We do this in a supportive way, so that the reader doesn't feel threatenod. This models helping behavior for the children, so they can be better peer teachers.

After reading the passage, it is time to discuss it. This discussion should be short and focus on some particular point. This might be the place to talk about the particular grammatical point on which the lesson is based, but it should be brief. I usually limit discussions to interesting words in the lesson, or a new concept. When we did the morning message about February holidays, it was necessary to talk a bit about Groundhog Day and its significance, without going into great detail about it.

As a final step, I give the children opportunities to mark various things in the message. They emphasize different concepts and allow children at various levels of development to participate. Let me show you some things we could do with the morning message about February. (Figure 6)

1 TEACHER DETERMINES A 30-40 MINUTE TIME PERIOD FOR THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

2 TEACHER PRINTS SCHOLAR SKILLS MESSAGE ON CHALKBOARD, MAKING CERTAIN ALL STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THE BOARD CLEARLY

3 TEACHER READS MESSAGE ALOUD TO STUDENTS, MODELING ORAL EXPRESSION AND ENTHUSIASM

4 STUDENTS JOIN IN AS TEACHER AND STUDENTS READ ALOUD TOGETHER SEVERAL TIMES

5 VOLUNTEERS READ ALL OR PART OF MESSAGE, RECEIVING QUICK HELP WHEN NEEDED. TEACHER REINFORCES STUDENTS OFTEN FOR THEIR ATTEMPTS AND SUCCESSES

6 TEACHER INTRODUCES AND LEADS DISCUSSION OF ANY NEW OR INTERESTING WORDS, CONCEPTS, FIGURES OF SPEECH, RIDDLES, PHONETIC PRINCIPLES, OR MECHANICAL RULES

7 STUDENTS PUNCTUATE LAST LINE OF MESSAGE

8 VOLUNTEERS IDENTIFY AND MARK OTHER LANGUAGE ELEMENTS FOUND IN MESSAGE

WHAT TO DO WITH A MORNING MESSAGE

Figure 5

(, 1980)

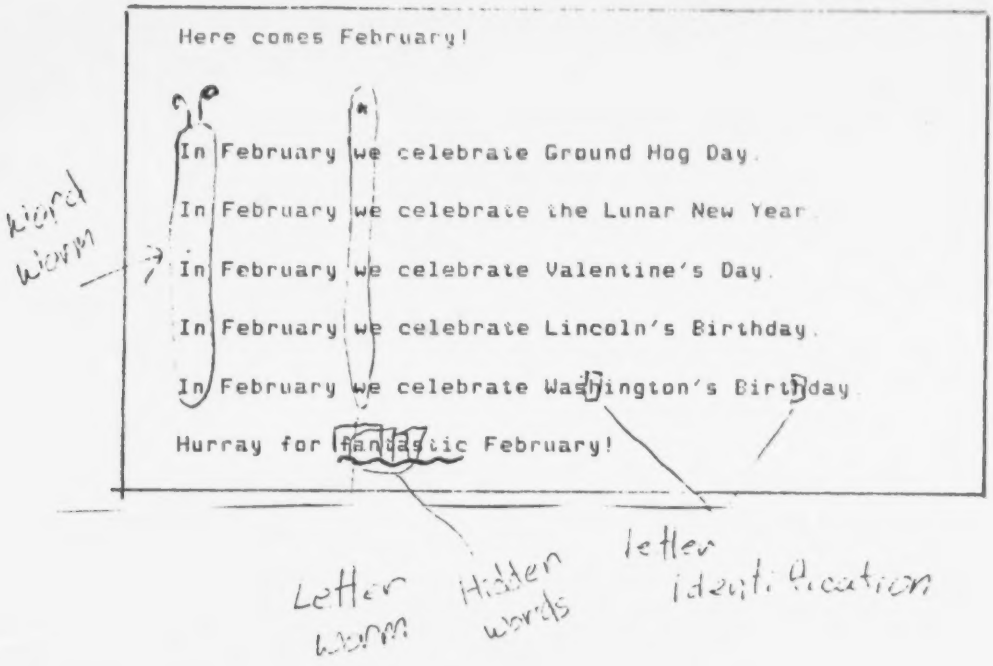

Here comes February!
In February we celebrate Ground Hog Day.
In February we celebrate the Lunar New Year.
In February we celebrate Valentine's Day.
In February we celebrate Lincoln's Birthday.
In February we celebrate Washington's Birthday.
Hurray for fantastic February!
Letter worm
Hidden words
letter identification

Figure 6

-Word Worms

-Letter Identification

-Letter Worms

-Root Words

-Hidden Words

Other possible activities might include any of the following:

-Identify words they can read

-Digraphs -Silent letters

-Blends -Long/short vowels

-Syllables -Punctuation

-Prefixes -Alliterations

-Suffixes -Idioms

Whenever we do an activity with the morning message we try to find opportunities to reread it, either individually or as a group.

Sometimes I have children copy the message during small groups to practice handwriting. With older or more advanced students it is possible to have them edit a message, correcting deliberate punctuation or spelling errors.

The next whole language activity I'd like to share with you is a writing activity, which can be done at beginning levels. We call this activity, Squiggle Writing. The basic idea is to give the child a starter from which s/he can make a picture. Then s/he will use this drawing as a basis for writing a story.

The first step is to give a child a squiggle on a blank sheet of drawing paper. Here are some examples of squiggles. (Figure 7) It doesn't take much imagination to come up with a new squiggle each time. It is important to remember that it should be something the child can expand into a detailed, colored picture. After the child completes the picture, s/he then writes a story to go with the illustration.

This all sound deceptively simple, and in some ways it is. The teacher's role is one of facilitator and encourager. The objective is to provide students with a risk-free environment in which to write. They apply language rules to their writing as THEY perceive them. This means invented spelling and long sentences with the word, and, used repeatedly. It also means that the teacher must accept the spellings, and help children take risks in spelling. Sometimes it is easier for teachers to accept invented spelling than it is for the children. They must understand that they don't have to spell every word correctly. They have to try, rather than ask the teacher how to spell everything. Have usable dictionaries available. Sometimes it's fun to appoint one student at the "dictionary person". It becomes her/his task to help the others find spellings for words.

The next step is a writing conference with the teacher. The teacher becomes an editor, but not in the traditional sense.

It's difficult at first to put away the red pencil and stifle the urge to correct mistakes. I always have the child read her/his story to me. Then we discuss it together, with me giving as much positive feedback as I can.

If I find a child consistently making the same error, I will try to find a way to help her/him see how to change the writing. For example, if a child has trouble with run-ons, I may ask her/him to read the story out loud again and listen to her/his intonation to detect were the periods go. Another example is the student who uses "and" to connect sentences. I might ask her/him to reread the story and leave out all the "and's", just to see if it is possible. Then encourage her/him to try writing again without using "and's".

If several children share certain traits, we may talk about them as a whole group. One example is style. At the very beginning, when squiggle writing is introduced, we have several discussions about what makes a story a story. We talk about the fact that all stories must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. If the children get in a rut and begin all their stories with "once upon a time", we will talk about different ways to begin stores, and think about the beginnings of stories we're read and heard.

One of the things the children enjoy very much is sharing the stories they've written. This gives them a chance to

"show off". They get feedback from their peers, which helps them improve, too. It is also possible to have peer editing and peer reading conferences. Our principal enjoys having children read to him. This is a great opportunity for the children to read their stories.

Another whole language activity we use with squiggle writing is book publishing. This can be done in several ways. One book can be published for the entire group. Individuals can publish their own books. Stories can be submitted for publication in the school newspaper or district-wide publications. Some of our students' books have become part of the school's library collection. Before publishing, the children are encouraged to do more editing. Usually, they realize that if something is to be published to must be polished.

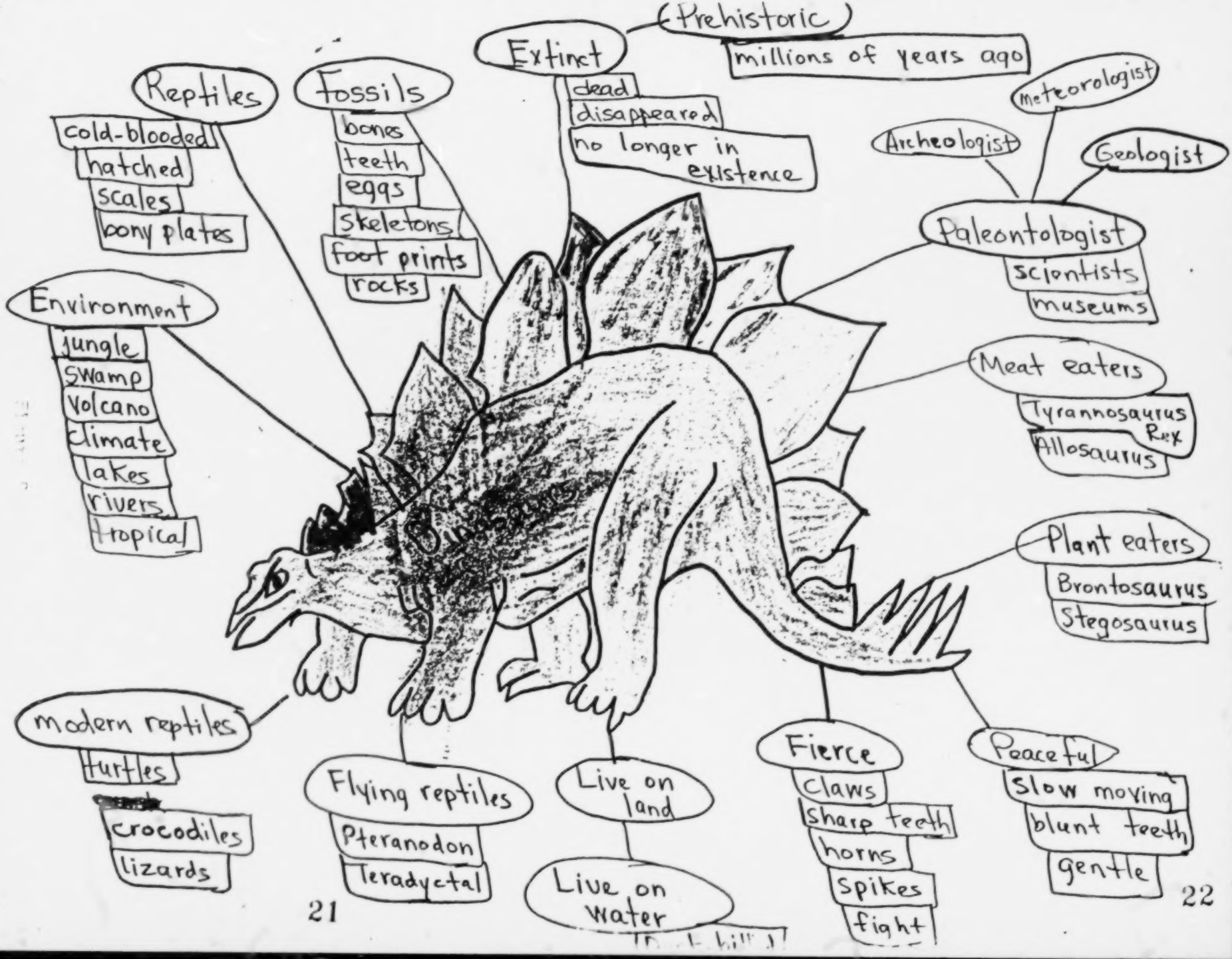
The final whole language activity I'd like to share with you, I call "doing research", which can be done with intermediate or advanced level students.

I usually do research as part of a theme. It can be done on an individual basis, with children researching anything that interests them.. However, this takes more resources than I've been able to collect. We recently did a Dinosaur theme in several groups. This dinosaur research lasted several weeks, doing other activities part of the time. My first task was to gather as many materials as I could about dinosaurs at the

students' levels, so they could find information. I also found materials to create a dinosaur environment, with bulletin boards, dioramas, and charts about dinosaur all over the room. This aroused curiosity among the students, which led into motivating activities. These included reading books to the students, making a web (Figure 8), some audio-visual materials, and sharing at books on the subject.

We completed several activities over the following weeks. Students made their own dinosaur books, drawing pictures and writing about dinosaurs that interested them. We made charts classifying them by the time period in which they lived and the type of dinosaur they were. We made cornstarch/baking soda playdough and created dinosaur models. We even made dinosaur cookies. I'm hoping that some of them will develop what they've done for our school science fair next month.

These are just a few whole-language activities we've used in our ESL room. We've been trying to create a risk-free language environment for our students. We feel they are making very good progress and have benefitted from these activities. I find that I'm more relaxed and am having fun. This may not be the answer for everyone, but I have found it successful. It seems to fit my style better than anything else I've ever tried. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to try and answer them.


Prehistoric
millions of years ago
Extinct
dead
disappeared
no longer in existence
Reptiles
cold-blooded
hatched
scales
bony plates
fossils
bones
teeth
eggs
skeletons
foot prints
rocks
Environment
jungle
swamp
volcano
climate
lakes
rivers
tropical
meteorologist
Archeologist
Geologist
Paleontologist
scientists
museums
Meat eaters
Tyrannosaurus Rex
Allosaurus
Plant eaters
Brontosaurus
Stegosaurus
modern reptiles
turtles
crocodiles
lizards
Flying reptiles
Pteranodon
Teradyctal
Live on land
Live on water
Fierce
claws
sharp teeth
horns
spikes
fight
Peaceful
slow moving
blunt teeth
gentle

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*This book may be obtained through Colborn's School Supply, 1105 San Mateo Blvd., NE., Albuquerque, NM, 87110. The price is $9.95.